results as long as it does not separate reason from truth. However, if reason and freedom separate themselves from the principles and values on which their dynamism and proper exercise depend, freedom itself is jeopardized and, sooner or later, license inevitably takes its place” (50). The choice before us is whether to return to truth or risk turmoil.

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Readers of the CSSR will be delighted to find a hidden gem of Catholic social thinking in this top-rate book about early Christianity. Robert Louis Wilken, the eminent historian of early Christianity (University of Virginia), who is now in full communion with the Catholic Church, places in his eighth chapter (“Happy the People Whose God is the Lord”) a stunning discussion of Augustine’s *City of God*. Accessible apart from the rest of the book, it contains a clear depiction of what precisely constitutes that City in relation to the City of Man, and convincingly shows the implications of that distinction for the social lives of Christians. I will first discuss this important chapter of Wilken’s book, and then, confident that readers of that chapter will be lured into the rest of the book, I will take an all-too-quick look into some of the other chapters.

Wilken initially shows how Augustine’s work is a response of sorts to Plato’s *Republic*, wherein Plato set forth what an ideal city would look like. One would expect, in reply, that Augustine would present his own model city that Christians should strive to build, but the city of God is an actual city—“a social and religious fact”—into which one can enter and be in communion with God (as contrasted to the city of man, in which God as the highest good is missing). This city is “an ordered, purposeful gathering of human beings with a distinctive way of life, institutions, laws, beliefs, memory, and form of worship” (191), and its end is peace (193), a peace that comes from the enjoyment in God of one another (“Christianity is fundamentally social” [195]).
We are members of the city of God while on pilgrimage in this life. Hence, Augustine's city of God includes both "cities" of which Gaudium et spes (using the terminology differently) says we are members when it states that Christians, "as citizens of two cities," should discharge their earthly duties conscientiously (art. 43). Due to our disordered passions and turbulent desires, we will never have the lasting peace of the City of God here on earth in perfect form. Still, we are called to be fully immersed in the temporal order. The Christian bishop, for example, while not a functionary of the state like pagan priests, as the leader of "an alternate society" or "another city" became immersed in the social and political life of the empire (200). Christians have their ultimate sights on the eternal city, but that city neither annuls the institutions of society, nor allow them a "neutral secular space" (208). Rather it impels societal arrangements to become ever more compatible with the worship of the true God (203, 208).

The other chapters of Wilken's book are all noteworthy, the product of both sound scholarship and profound contemplation. Page after page the author lets the early tradition speak and breathe into the reader's life, making this one of those rare books that is simultaneously scholarly and a source for prayerful meditation.

Chapter 1 contrasts the Greek view of the divine (Platonic, intellectual) with the historical particularity of Christianity, and goes on to recount some of the liveliest themes from Wilken's earlier book, The Christians as the Romans Saw Them. Included here is a fine insight: the historical particularity of Christianity enhances, not diminishes, the role of reason: "It has been said that Christianity brought a loss of nerve and a distrust of reason. But one might argue that Christian revelation put an end to skepticism and gave men and women new confidence in reason" (23). From a new height, reason can see farther than ever. (Chapter 7 returns to this theme in more depth.) Chapter 2 carries this historical particularity the full Catholic route—to the Eucharist, a truly social event in which all believers, living and dead, are fused into a single community (47). The truth of the Eucharist "preceded every effort to understand and nourished every attempt to express in words and concepts what Christians believed" (37). Chapter 3 shows how historical particularity is rooted in the Scriptures, and is a marvelous introduction to the Patristic skill of mining the deeper meaning from the text. The economy of salvation, in all its particularity, is what allowed Christians to enter into the mystery of the Trinity, the subject of chapters 4 and 5. Here we are treated to a close look at Hilary of Poitiers (who battled Arianism) and Maximus the Confessor (who, in fighting the Monothelites, won the crown of martyrdom).
Chapter 9 is a surprising and delightful foray into Christian poetry, focusing on Ambrose and Lactantius. Included is the inspiring story of the Arians attempting a takeover of a church in Milan. The faithful simply occupied the church, and to encourage them, Ambrose composed hymns for them to sing antiphonally. Chapter 10 captures the Catholic sacramental view of reality in its meditation on the goodness of matter—and this reader emerged with a fresh appreciation for relics! Chapter 11 shows how the moral life is, for Christians, inseparable from the faith. (One suggestion: Wilken notes that the four cardinal virtues seem too limited, but that misses just the point: the massive panoply of virtues swings on the hinges [cardo, -inis] of the four cardinal virtues.) From this chapter I choose a lengthier selection of Wilken’s fine prose:

For Christians the moral life and the religious life were complementary. Although thinking about the moral life moved within a conceptual framework inherited from Greek and Latin moralists, Christian thinkers redefined the goal by making fellowship with the living God the end, revised the beginning by introducing the biblical teaching that we are made in the image of God, and complicated the middle with talk of the intractability and inevitability of sin. Without an understanding of the ancient moralists Aristotle, Seneca, Cicero, and Epictetus, one cannot enter the world of early Christian ethics, yet as soon as one takes in hand the essays of Clement or Tertullian or Ambrose or reads the sermons of Gregory of Nyssa or Augustine, it is clear that something new is afoot. (275)

Chapter 12 further focuses the moral life with a look at the passions, clearly showing the difference between Stoicism, which dismissed the passions as disordered, and Christianity, which allows the passions, rightly ordered, to serve in our quest for the ultimate Good. An epilogue echoes the biblical meditations of chapter 3, noting how Christianity roots itself in historical particularity as narrated in the Bible while simultaneously using the various tools of classical culture.

This review has focused on the theological themes of the book, but it should be noted that these themes are always explicated through the eyes of the early Greek and Latin Fathers—Wilken humbly “surrenders himself” and lets us see reality through their eyes. The one chapter I have not commented on (6), for example, introduces us to two of the Cappadocian fathers, Basil and Gregory of Nyssa. Wilken’s concluding comments are apt:
The Church Fathers...set in place a foundation that has proven to be irreplaceable. Their writings are more than a stage in the development of Christian thought or an interesting chapter in the history of the interpretation of the Bible. Like an inexhaustible spring, faithful and true, they irrigate the Christian imagination with life-giving water flowing from the biblical and spiritual sources of the faith. They are still our teachers today. (312)

Teachers, and friends. By the end of the book, the reader feels a certain kinship with quite an array of the early Fathers. In an entirely non-polemical manner Wilken has allowed the truth of Catholicism to shine forth from his skilled treatment of these heroes of the early church.

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